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By Mr. T O W N,
CRITIC and CENSOR-GENERAL.

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Odi profanum vulgus, et arceo.

HOR.



KNOW not any greater misfortune that can happen to a young fellow at his first setting out in life, than his falling into Low Company. He that sinks to a familiarity with persons much below his own level, will be constantly weighed down by his base connections: and though he may easily plunge still lower, he will find it impossible ever to rise again. We cannot give a liberal

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turn of mind to a vulgar by introducing him to genteel company, any more than we can make a beau of him by dressing him in embroidery: but a gentleman will as naturally catch the manners of a blackguard by mixing with blackguards, as he would daub his cloaths with foot by running against a chimney-sweeper.

By Low Company I would not be supposed to mean the best and most valuable part of mankind, which have been distinguished by the name of Middling sort of people: though I am not ignorant, that these are despised by all, who would be thought to keep the Best Company. The apes of quality affect to look upon all others, who have no relish for the amusements of high life, or do not chuse to pay a guinea for their ordinary, as downright vulgars: and it was with the utmost contempt I once heard a young coxcomb of fashion speak of a most intimate friend, "that he should be forced to drop his acquaintance, because he kept such low company." Neither would I confine this appellation solely to the inferior order of tradesmen and mechanics, or the whole body of the mobility in general: for although this rank of people may be literally said to be in low life, a right honourable, who lets himself down to the manners of a porter or a hackney-coachman, differs from them in nothing but his title.

A PROPENSITY to Low Company is either owing to an original meanness of spirit, a want of education, or

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an ill-placed pride, commonly arising from both the fore-mentioned causes. Those, who are naturally of a grovelling disposition, shew it even at school, by chusing their play-mates from the scum of the class; and are never so happy, as when they can steal down to romp with the servants in the kitchen. But the most frequent cause is the desire of being, as it is called, the head of the company; and a person of this humble ambition will be very well content to pay the reckoning, for the honour of being distinguished by the title of *The Gentleman*. It sometimes happens, that a man of genius and learning will stoop to receive the incense of mean and illiterate flatterers in a porter-house or a cyder-cellar: and I remember to have heard of a poet, who was once caught in a bawdy-house in the very fact, of reading his verses to the good old mother and a circle of her daughters.

THERE are some, who have been led into Low Company, merely from an affectation of Humour; and from a notion of seeing life, and a desire of being accounted men of humour, have descended to associate with the meanest of the mob, and picked their cronies from *White-Chapel* and *Broad St. Giles's*. Of these characters the most remarkable is a young fellow of family and fortune, who was born and bred a gentleman, but has taken great pains to degrade himself; and is now as complete a blackguard as those whom he has chosen for his companions. He will drink purl in a morning,

morning, smoke his pipe in a night-cellar, and eat black puddings at *Bartholomew Fair*, for the Humour of the thing. All the while, he is reckoned by his friends to be a mighty good-natured gentleman, and without the least bit of pride in him.

IN order to qualify himself for the society of the vulgar, *Bob* has studied and practised all the vulgar arts under the best masters. He has therefore cultivated an intimacy with *Buckhorse*, and is very proud of being sometimes admitted to the honour of conversing with the great *Broughton* himself. He is also very well known among the hackney-coachmen, as a brother-whip: but his greatest excellence is cricket-playing, in which he is reckoned as good a bat as either of the *Bennets*; and is at length arrived at the supreme dignity of being distinguished among his brethren of the wicket by the title of *Long Robin*.

IT is diverting enough to consider the fate of many of *Bob's* intimate friends and acquaintance. It must be owned, that some of these have come to an untimely end; that some have been sent abroad, and others been set in the pillory, or whipt in *Bridewell*. One of *Bob's* favourite amusements is attending the executions at *Tyburn*: and it once happened, that one of his companions was unfortunately brought thither; when *Bob* carried his regard for his deceased friend so far, as to
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get himself knocked down in endeavouring to rescue the body from the surgeons.

As *Bob* constantly affects to mimic the air and manners of the vulgar, he takes care to enrich his conversation with the emphatical oaths and expressive dialect of *Billingsgate* and *St. Giles's*; which never fails to recommend him as a man of excellent humour among the *Choice Spirits* and the *Sons of sound sense and satisfaction*, and frequently promotes him to the chair in these facetious societies. But he is particularly famous for singing those *Cant Songs*, drawn up in the lingo of sharpers and pick-pockets; the humour of which he greatly sets off and heightens, by screwing up his mouth, and rolling about a large quid of tobacco between his jaws.

BOB has indulged the same notions of humour even in his amours: and he is well known to every street-walker between *Charing-Cross* and *Cheap-Side*. This has ruined his constitution, and often involved him in several unluckly scrapes. He has been frequently bruised, beat, and kicked by the bullies in *Fleet-Ditch* and *Blood-Bowl Alley*; and he was once soundly drubbed by a soldier for engaging with his trull in *St. James's Park*. The last time I saw him, he was laid up with two black eyes, and a broken pate, which he got in a midnight skirmish about a mistress in a night-cellar. He had carried down a

bunter which he had picked up in the streets, in order to treat her with a quartern of gin royal; when a sturdy chairman attempting to take away his doxy, a battle ensued between them, and he was severely handled, amid the universal cry of the whole company, of—kick him *up* stairs—kick him *up* stairs.

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